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ABSTRACT

This book examines the history of supportive social services to examine ways in which those services have been helpful, and sometimes unhelpful, to poor families; the factors that have constrained service provision and reform; and what would make the service enterprise viable in the coming years. Discussed are formative influences on the development and evolution of supportive social services; their objectives and underlying assumptions; approaches, achievements, and dilemmas faced by providers; and lessons learned from experiences. Selected current reform initiatives are also examined, as well as innovative service approaches in relation to those lessons. The focus of the book is on those services designed to support and, as necessary, strengthen childrearing and family life and, to a lesser extent, those designed to help poor families move toward economic independence. Chapters 1 and 2 analyze the emergence of services as a distinct and social realm and formative dilemmas in purpose and practice. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss developments spanning the 1920s to 1960s, including early organization trends and the consolidation of services and efforts to respond to changing inner-city populations. Chapters 7 and 8 look at the complicated mixture of developments in supportive services during the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter 9 discusses developments during the 1990s: emergent ideological debates; developments in social welfare policy; and current service reform trends, approaches and specific initiatives. The concluding chapter summarizes the lessons learned from historical experience with supportive services and discusses tasks for the future--the conceptual one of restructuring a more positive vision of social services and the concrete one of designing and supporting good services on the ground. (Contains 385 references.) (GCP)

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